

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

PRESS COPY

12 - 1547

JULIUS FORDE,

Plaintiff,

-against-

THE CITY OF NEW YORK, P.O. GREGORY WAITHE,
Shield No. 13367, Individually and in his Official
Capacity, and P.O.'s "JOHN DOE" #1-10, Individually
and in their Official Capacity (the name John Doe being
fictitious, as the true names are presently unknown),

Defendants.

COMPLAINT

JURY TRIAL

U.S. DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
2012 MAR 29 PM 4:58
FILED
CLERK
M. J.
GOLD, J.

-----X

Plaintiff JULIUS FORDE, by his attorneys, COHEN & FITCH LLP, complaining of the
defendants, respectfully alleges as follows:

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

1. Plaintiff brings this action for compensatory damages, punitive damages and attorney's fees pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §1983 and 42 U.S.C. §1988 for violations of her civil rights, as said rights are secured by said statutes and the Constitutions of the State of New York and the United States.

JURISDICTION

2. This action is brought pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §1983 and 42 U.S.C. §1988, and the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution.

3. Jurisdiction is founded upon 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331, 1343 and 1367.

VENUE

4. Venue is properly laid in the Eastern District of New York under U.S.C. §1391(b), in that this is the District in which the claim arose.

JURY DEMAND

5. Plaintiff respectfully demands a trial by jury of all issues in this matter pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 38(b).

PARTIES

6. Plaintiff JULIUS FORDE is an African-American male and has been at all relevant times a resident of the City and State of New York.

7. Defendant, THE CITY OF NEW YORK, was and is a municipal corporation duly organized and existing under and by virtue of the laws of the State of New York.

8. Defendant, THE CITY OF NEW YORK, maintains the New York City Police Department, a duly authorized public authority and/or police department, authorized to perform all functions of a police department as per the applicable sections of the New York State Criminal Procedure Law, acting under the direction and supervision of the aforementioned municipal corporation, The City of New York.

9. At all times hereinafter mentioned, the individually named defendants P.O. GREGORY WAITHE, and P.O.s "JOHN DOE" #1-#10 were duly sworn police officers of said department and were acting under the supervision of said department and according to their official duties.

10. At all times hereinafter mentioned the defendants, either personally or through their employees, were acting under color of state law and/or in compliance with the official rules, regulations, laws, statutes, customs, usages and/or practices of the State or City of New York.

11. Each and all of the acts of the defendants alleged herein were done by said defendants while acting within the scope of their employment by defendant THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

12. Each and all of the acts of the defendants alleged herein were done by said defendants while acting in furtherance of their employment by defendant THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

FACTS

13. On or about November 29, 2011, at approximately 10:55 a.m., plaintiff JULIUS FORDE was lawfully present in the driveway of a friend's home, located at 9314 Avenue M, in Kings County, State of New York.

14. At the aforesaid time and place, plaintiff had just exited his vehicle and began walking towards his friend's house when he was suddenly accosted by defendant police officers.

15. Defendant officers immediately searched plaintiff, uncovering no evidence of criminal or unlawful activity whatsoever.

16. Nevertheless, plaintiff was handcuffed with his arms tightly behind his back and taken to a nearby police precinct where he was charged with Operation of a Vehicle without Safety Belts and Resisting Arrest.

17. At no time on November 29, 2011, did plaintiff resist arrest, operate his vehicle without a safety belt, or behave unlawfully in any way.

18. At no time on November 29, 2011, did defendants possess probable cause to arrest plaintiff JULIUS FORDE.

19. At no time on November 29, 2011, did defendants possess information that would lead a reasonable officer to believe probable cause existed to arrest plaintiff JULIUS FORDE.

20. As a result of his unlawful arrest, plaintiff JULIUS FORDE spent approximately thirty-two (32) hours in police custody before his case was dismissed at his arraignment on November 30, 2011.

21. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff JULIUS FORDE sustained, *inter alia*, mental anguish, shock, fright, apprehension, embarrassment, humiliation, and deprivation of her constitutional rights.

FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF
DEPRIVATION OF FEDERAL RIGHTS UNDER 42 U.S.C. § 1983

22. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "21" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

23. All of the aforementioned acts of defendants, their agents, servants and employees, were carried out under the color of state law.

24. All of the aforementioned acts deprived plaintiff of the rights, privileges and immunities guaranteed to citizens of the United States by the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States of America, and in violation of 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

25. The acts complained of were carried out by the aforementioned individual defendants in their capacities as police officers with all the actual and/or apparent authority attendant thereto.

26. The acts complained of were carried out by the aforementioned individual defendants in their capacities as police officers, pursuant to the customs, usages, practices, procedures, and the rules of the City of New York and the New York City Police Department, all under the supervision of ranking officers of said department.

27. Defendants, collectively and individually, while acting under color of state law, engaged in conduct which constituted a custom, usage, practice, procedure or rule of the respective municipality/authority, which is forbidden by the Constitution of the United States.

SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF
FALSE ARREST UNDER 42 U.S.C. § 1983

28. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "27" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

29. As a result of the aforesaid conduct by defendants, plaintiff was subjected to illegal, improper and false arrest by the defendants, taken into custody, and caused to be falsely imprisoned, detained, and confined, without any probable cause, privilege or consent.

30. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff's liberty was restricted for extended periods of time, he was put in fear for his safety, and he was humiliated and subjected to handcuffing and other physical restraints, without probable cause.

THIRD CLAIM FOR RELIEF
MUNICIPAL LIABILITY UNDER 42 U.S.C. § 1983

31. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "30" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

32. Defendants, collectively and individually, while acting under color of state law, engaged in conduct that constituted a custom, usage, practice, procedure or rule of the respective municipality/authority, which is forbidden by the Constitution of the United States.

33. The aforementioned customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of the City of New York and the New York City Police Department include, but are not limited to, the following unconstitutional practices:

- i. arresting individuals regardless of probable cause in order to inflate the officer's arrest statistics; and

- ii. arresting innocent persons notwithstanding the existence of credible evidence which exonerates the accused of any criminal wrongdoing.

34. The foregoing customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of the City of New York and the New York City Police Department constituted deliberate indifference to the safety, well-being and constitutional rights of plaintiff.

35. The foregoing customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of the City of New York and the New York City Police Department were the direct and proximate cause of the constitutional violations suffered by plaintiff as alleged herein.

36. The foregoing customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of the City of New York and the New York City Police Department were the moving force behind the constitutional violations suffered by plaintiff as alleged herein.

37. Defendants, collectively and individually, while acting under color of state law, were directly and actively involved in violating plaintiff's constitutional rights.

38. Defendants, collectively and individually, while acting under color of state law, acquiesced in a pattern of unconstitutional conduct by subordinate police officers, and were directly responsible for the violation of plaintiff JULIUS FORDE's constitutional rights.

39. The acts complained of deprived plaintiffs of his rights:

- i. Not to be deprived of liberty without due process of law;
- ii. To be free from seizure and arrest not based upon probable cause;
- iii. To be free from unlawful search;
- iv. Not to have summary punishment imposed upon him; and
- v. To receive equal protection under the law.

PENDANT STATE CLAIMS

40. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "39" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

41. On or about December 15, 2011, and within ninety (90) days after the claim herein accrued, the plaintiff duly served upon, presented to and filed with defendant THE CITY OF NEW YORK, a Notice of Claim setting forth all facts and information required under the General Municipal Law § 50 (e).

42. Defendant THE CITY OF NEW YORK has wholly neglected or refused to make an adjustment or payment thereof and more than thirty (30) days have elapsed since the presentation of such claim as aforesaid.

43. Defendant THE CITY OF NEW YORK demanded a hearing pursuant to General Municipal Law § 50-h and plaintiff's hearing took place on February 10, 2012.

44. This action was commenced within one (1) year and ninety (90) days after the cause of action herein accrued.

45. Plaintiff has complied with all conditions precedent to maintaining the instant action.

46. This action falls within one or more of the exceptions as outlined in C.P.L.R. § 1602.

**FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF UNDER N.Y. STATE LAW
ASSAULT**

47. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "46" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

48. Defendants' aforementioned actions placed plaintiff in apprehension of imminent harmful and offensive bodily contact.

49. As a result of defendants' conduct, plaintiff has suffered physical pain and mental anguish, together with shock, fright, apprehension, embarrassment, and humiliation.

**SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF UNDER N.Y. STATE LAW
BATTERY**

50. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "49" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

51. Defendant police officers touched plaintiff JULIUS FORDE in a harmful and offensive manner.

52. Defendant police officers did so without privilege or consent from plaintiff.

53. As a result of defendants' conduct, plaintiff has suffered physical pain and mental anguish, together with shock, fright, apprehension, embarrassment and humiliation.

**THIRD CLAIM FOR RELIEF UNDER N.Y. STATE LAW
FALSE ARREST**

54. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "53" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

55. Defendant police officers arrested plaintiff JULIUS FORDE in the absence of probable cause and without a warrant.

56. As a result of the aforesaid conduct by defendants, plaintiff JULIUS FORDE was subjected to an illegal, improper and false arrest by the defendants and taken into custody and caused to be falsely imprisoned, detained, confined, incarcerated and prosecuted by the defendants in criminal proceedings. The aforesaid actions by the defendants constituted a deprivation of plaintiff's rights.

**FOURTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF UNDER N.Y. STATE LAW
FALSE IMPRISONMENT**

57. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "56" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

58. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff JULIUS FORDE was falsely imprisoned, his liberty was restricted for an extended period of time, was put in fear for his safety, was humiliated and subjected to handcuffing, and other physical restraints.

59. Plaintiff was conscious of said confinement and did not consent to same.

60. The confinement of plaintiff was without probable cause and was not otherwise privileged.

61. As a result of the aforementioned conduct, plaintiff has suffered physical and mental injury, together with embarrassment, humiliation, shock, fright and loss of freedom.

**FIFTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF UNDER N.Y. STATE LAW
INTENTIONAL INFLICTION OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS**

62. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "61" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

63. The aforementioned conduct was extreme and outrageous, and exceeded all reasonable bounds of decency.

64. The aforementioned conduct was committed by defendants while acting within the scope of their employment by defendant THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

65. The aforementioned conduct was committed by defendants while acting in furtherance of their employment by defendant THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

66. The aforementioned conduct was intentional and done for the sole purpose of causing severe emotional distress to plaintiff.

67. As a result of the aforementioned conduct, plaintiff suffered severe emotional distress, mental injury, together with embarrassment, humiliation, shock, fright and loss of freedom.

**SIXTH CLAIM FOR RELIEF UNDER N.Y. STATE LAW
NEGLIGENT HIRING/TRAINING/SUPERVISION/RETENTION**

68. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "67" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

69. Defendant CITY OF NEW YORK selected, hired, trained, retained, assigned and supervised all members of its Police Department, including the defendants individually named above.

70. Defendant CITY OF NEW YORK was negligent and careless when it selected, hired, trained, retained, assigned, and supervised all members of its Police Department including the defendants individually named above.

71. Due to the negligence of the defendants as set forth above, plaintiff suffered mental injury, pain and trauma, together with embarrassment, humiliation shock, fright, and loss of freedom.

72. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff is entitled to compensatory damages and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants.

WHEREFORE, plaintiff respectfully requests judgment against defendants as follows:

- i. an order awarding compensatory damages in an amount to be determined at trial;
- ii. an order awarding punitive damages in an amount to be determined at trial;
- iii. reasonable attorneys' fees and costs under 42 U.S.C. § 1988; and

- iv. directing such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper, together with attorneys' fees, interest, costs and disbursements of this action.

Dated: New York, New York
March 27, 2012

BY: 

GERALD COHEN
JOSHUA FITCH
COHEN & FITCH LLP
Attorneys for Plaintiff
The Woolworth Building
233 Broadway, Suite 1800
New York, N.Y. 10279
(212) 374-9115
gcohen@cohenfitch.com
jfitch@cohenfitch.com